



Congressional Record

Mr. Bishop (GA). Madame Speaker, I rise in support of my amendment to H.R. 2647, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. In short, my amendment would provide the Department of Defense, and in particular, the Office of Economic Adjustment, the authority to financially support the development and construction of public infrastructure in communities which are directly impacted by the expansion and growth of military installations.

Madame Speaker, the last Military Base Re-alignment and Closure initiative, which occurred in 2005, coupled with the ongoing transformation of the Army and re-positioning of troops world-wide, has had a tremendous impact on the local communities which house our nation's military installations and facilities.

In its FY2009 Budget Justification, DOD estimated the total one-time cost for the most recent BRAC round in 2005 at nearly \$32 billion dollars, of which nearly \$23 billion will be for military construction. For FY2009, DOD's budget request was \$9.07 billion, while Congress approved \$8.77 billion. And just yesterday, the House Appropriations Committee, of which I am a member, approved at total of \$7.49 billion for BRAC construction activities.

The Muscogee County School District for example, which is located in my congressional district in Georgia, is estimated to receive 5,000 to 9,000 additional school-aged children as a result of the planned growth and expansion of Ft. Benning. DOD's most recent projections put the number of new school aged children at approximately 3,000 to 4,000. But no matter what the number, there is a consensus that several thousand new children will be attending a school system which currently does not have the facilities to house them.

According to some estimates, nearly twenty-five local school districts nationwide could be required to accommodate tens of thousands of additional military dependent school-aged children due entirely to DOD actions and decisions. The financial cost to school systems across the country resulting from the latest round of DOD initiatives could exceed \$2 billion over the course of the next several years. This includes the communities surrounding Ft. Bliss [Texas], Ft. Bragg [North Carolina], Ft. Carson [Colorado], Ft Lee [Virginia], as well as several other facilities where major growth is envisioned by DOD.

By providing DOD the authority to develop public infrastructure, including local schools, as provided in my amendment, we begin to address this challenge by providing the Department

with expanded authority to assist select communities in addressing their local facility needs.

There is precedent. During WWII, the Korea and Vietnam wars, our National leaders saw fit to partner with local education agencies to build schools to accommodate children of the military, defense employees and contractors who worked on the military installations. Likewise, the Department supported the construction of schools as a result of the expansion and growth of the military's Kings Bay installation.

Madame Speaker, in closing, the enormity and size of the challenges facing communities impacted by DOD personnel movements is overwhelming. This amendment is an important step in providing the Department with the authority to begin to work with these communities in addressing their infrastructure needs – needs which have been created by the Department's own actions.

Thank you and I urge the House's support for this amendment.